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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes the outcome of two behavior management programs provided to undergraduate student teachers at the University of Victoria, British Columbia. Eighteen student teachers were taught to use behavior management strategies to improve the attending behavior of elementary school pupils. Each student teacher was randomly assigned to one of two experimental groups. These groups differed in only one respect: classroom coaching and supervision was provided to one group, but not to those in the second group. One disruptive, non-attending pupil was selected from the classrooms to which these student teachers were assigned for their practicum. To measure the success of the student teachers' management program, time samples of attending and non-attending behavior were collected on each of these pupils. Although the pupils taught by both groups of student teachers showed improvement, significant changes in pupil attending occurred with those pupils whose student teachers had received both behavior management training, coaching, and supervision of these skills. (Author)

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Behaviour Management:

A Program for Undergraduate Elementary Student Teachers

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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes the outcome of two behaviour management programs provided to undergraduate student teachers. Eighteen student teachers were taught to use behaviour management strategies to improve the attending behaviour of elementary school pupils. Each student teacher was randomly assigned to one of two experimental groups. These groups differed in only one respect. Classroom coaching and supervision was provided to one group, but not to those in the second group.

One disruptive, non-attending pupil was selected from the classrooms to which these student teachers were assigned for their practicum. To measure the success of the student teachers' management program, time samples of attending and non-attending behaviour were collected on each of these pupils. Although the pupils taught by both groups of student teachers showed improvement, significant changes in pupil attending occurred with those pupils whose student teachers had received both behaviour management training, coaching and supervision of these skills.

Behavior Management:

A Program for Undergraduate Elementary Student Teachers

According to several surveys, classroom teachers at all levels view the area of classroom discipline and disruptive behaviour as primary problems. Clark & Hanka (1977), for example, found the lack of student discipline to be a major concern for Canadian teachers. Research by Allan, Doi & Reid (1979) indicates that elementary teachers and principals identify "help with discipline problems" to be among their greatest needs. In the United States Garguilo & Pigge (1979) found that the need "to motivate student achievement" was ranked first by elementary teachers from a list of 26 required teacher competencies. The ability "to maintain order in the classroom and to assist in the development of self-discipline" ranked third. In terms of proficiencies these areas ranked thirteenth and sixteenth respectively. Special education teachers ranked the ability "to maintain order and to assist in the development of self-discipline" first as a need and thirteenth as a proficiency. Garguilo & Pigge concluded that "if given a choice of inservice topics, teachers would probably rate discipline techniques as the number one priority" (p. 341). These results are consistent with Franc's (1970) survey of beginning elementary teachers from 26 U.S. school districts.

Current research also suggests that children who engage in high rates of inappropriate behaviours miss many of the learning experiences and academic skills which normally accrue to the attentive student. Cobb (1969), for example,

found attending behaviour to be an important correlate of arithmetic achievement for fourth-grade children. Stalling & Koskowitz (1974) discovered that among more than 100 significant correlations between classroom activities and student achievement, the highest correlations were obtained for the length of time students attend and reading and arithmetic achievement. Bloom (1976) reports consistent positive correlations between student attention and achievement gains.

Recent studies also indicate that there is a set of effective strategies for improving student motivation and general classroom behaviour. Teacher attention and extinction are among the strategies employed (Breyer & Allen, 1975; Marlowe, Madsen, Bowen, Reardon, & Logue, 1978). When token reinforcement is added to these procedures, further improvement is noted (Breyer & Allen, 1975; Marlowe et al., 1978). Time-out procedures are frequently used concurrently with the above strategies to reduce specific nonattending behaviour (Wahler, 1968; Walker, Madson, & Buckley, 1969).

Currently researchers are investigating varying approaches for effectively implementing these strategies into classroom settings. Borg, Langer, & Wilson (1975), for example, found that teachers who enrolled in a 30-hour course in classroom management significantly increased their students' work involvement and recitation in seatwork situations. Hett (1981) found that a group of teachers trained in the use of

behavioural principles in seminar and follow-up sessions were able to signficantly increase the attending behaviour of their deviant elementary pupils during the course of a school year. Greenwood, Walker, & Hops (1977) cite the effectiveness of a teacher training program for improving academic survival skills among school children.

Classroom discipline is a major concern to teachers. The children who cause the discipline problems, by engaging in inappropriate behaviour, appear to suffer academically. However, there appears to be a set of effective procedures for improving classroom behaviour that practising teachers have learned from seminar sessions and implemented in their classrooms. In some cases the improvement in classroom behaviour has resulted in an improvement in the disruptive child's academic performance. It appears, therefore, that these strategies are <u>important</u> and <u>necessary</u> components in teacher training programs and if they can be effectively used by the student teacher they should not be left as optional inservice training.

This study was designed to examine the effects of a behavior management program provided to groups of graduating student teachers. The project was designed to answer the following questions:

1. Can student teachers learn behaviour management skills during regular seminar sessions and effectively implement these skills into their classroom teaching?

2. Is clinical supervision required for the successful transfer of these skills into the student teacher's classroom.

METHOD

Subjects and Setting

Eighteen student teachers from the Faculty of Education, University of Victoria, Victoria, B.C. Canada, were randomly assigned to two experimental conditions. These groups were comprised of students selected from the Faculty's Post-Degree Professional Program. This program is designed as a one-year professional development program for students having earned an Arts and Science degree and who are entering the Faculty of Education for the first time. Students selected for this study were those assigned to schools in the Greater Victoria area and who agreed to participate in this study.

Procedure

Group I (Teaching with Clinical Supervision).

The classroom management program for Group I consisted of both a teaching and clinical supervision component. The teaching component was comprised of eleven, two-hour seminar sessions held during the fall term. The classroom use of positive reinforcement, extinction, negative reinforcement, punishment, time-out, token reinforcement and contingency contracting were discussed in detail. Each student teacher

was required to obtain a performance criterion of 80% on a written examination which tested their knowledge of these procedures. In addition, each student development a written classroom management plan which s/he intended to implement during the fall practicum. This plan was designed to increase and maintain the attending (on-task) behaviour of their pupils. Each plan also included procedures for dealing with individual pupil disruptive behaviour. Each management plan was approved by the writer and the student's sponsor teacher.

In addition to receiving direct instruction in these management procedures, classroom supervision was provided to this group of students by the writer and his assistants. The purpose of this supervision was to assist the student teachers with the implementation and effectiveness of their programs.

Group II (Teaching Only).

The classroom management program for Group II consisted of a teaching component only. This group attended the same series of weekly two-hour seminars on classroom management and wrote the same examination as did members of Group I. From these sessions each student developed a written classroom management plan which they implemented during their fall practicum. Clinical supervision was not provided to members of this group during their practicum.

Before these student teachers began their practicum, each of their sponsor teachers were visited by the writer. The classroom management instruction that the student teachers had received and the management plans each had devised were explained and the sponsor teacher's support was requested. The sponsor teachers were also asked to identify one or two pupils from their classrooms who manifest high rates of non-attending behaviour.

To measure the success of each student teacher's management program time samples of attending and non-attending behaviour were collected on each of these pupils during the first week of the student teacher's practicum. These data were collected before the student teachers implemented their management programs. Data collection was done by trained independent observers using a coding procedure designed for the study. The coding procedure required the observer to decide if the pupil was attending or not attending to the task at hand and to note these behaviours every six seconds. In an attempt to minimize observation measurement error, the observers were trained together until an interobserver reliability of .90 was reached. The degree of observer agreement was determined by calculating the total number of agreements and dividing this by the number of agreements plus the number of disagreements.

Initially, three 20-minute independent observations were

made in each experimental classroom. This data served as a baseline against which the efficacy of each student teacher's management program was judged. Three 20-minute independent classroom observations were then made in all classrooms after the student teachers implemented their classroom management programs.

RESULTS

A mean percentage score for pupil attending behaviour was established for the three 20-minute pretreatment and the three 20-minute treatment observations. The median scores for each Group are presented in Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Due to the small N used in the study, nonparametric statistics (Siegel, 1956) were employed to examine the data. Mann-Whitney U-tests were conducted to measure differences between Groups at pre-treatment and treatment. These results indicate no significant differences in attending behaviour between Groups at both assessment points. Wilcoxon's T tests (Table 1) were conducted to measure differences within Groups from pre-treatment to treatment. These findings indicate significant change for Group I ($p < .01$). Inspection of the mean scores in Figure 1 confirms the results from these two sets of analyses. Pre-treatment scores are similar across Groups though the Group I mean is below that of Group II. At

treatment the Group scores are much further apart than at pre-treatment with the Group I score noticeably higher than Group II. The change from pre-treatment to treatment for Group I is large compared to that of Group II.

Insert Table 1 about here

Discussion

The efficacy of contingency management programs for increasing the attending behaviour of children in regular classrooms has been well demonstrated (Hett, 1981; Greenwood, et al., 1977; Becker, Madsen, Arnold & Thomas, 1976; and Borg, Langer & Wilson, 1975). It appears that teachers are able to learn these procedures during seminar sessions and can effectively implement them in their classrooms. This approach to classroom management has distinct advantages. One advantage is that the educational psychologist or counsellor is able to work with groups of teachers rather than with individual children, resulting in an economy of his/her time. This approach also seems to result in a better maintenance of the desired effect than does the direct approach by an outside authority (Hett, 1981).

The present study differs from those cited above as it was conducted with inexperienced student teachers. Yet the pupils who were taught by these young teachers also showed improvement in attending (on-task) behaviour. It appears that the less experienced teacher is able to learn classroom

management procedures during seminar sessions and like the more experienced teacher can implement these procedures in their classrooms. However, the significant differences in attending behaviour occurred for pupils taught by teachers in Group 1. In addition to classroom instruction these student teachers received additional support from the writer and his assistants during weekly classroom visits. This support and supervision appears to have resulted in greater gains by their pupils than for those pupils taught by student teachers who did not receive this additional support.

Research suggests that designers of teacher education programs would be wise to include direct instruction in the area of behaviour management in their programs. In addition, our data suggests that coaching and supervision of these skills within the student teacher's classroom is a necessary and important assignment. This supervision appears to bridge the gap for the student teacher between being a passive recipient of instruction and the implementor of these critical pedagogical skills.

Table 1

Pre- to Post-treatment Wilcoxon's T Statistic and Median Percentage of Attending Behaviour for Treatment Groups

	Mean Percentage			
	N	Pre	Post	T
Group I (Teaching and Supervision)	9	54	72	$1 \leq 2$*
Group II (Teaching)	8	57.5	67	$5 \leq 4$

*$p < .01$

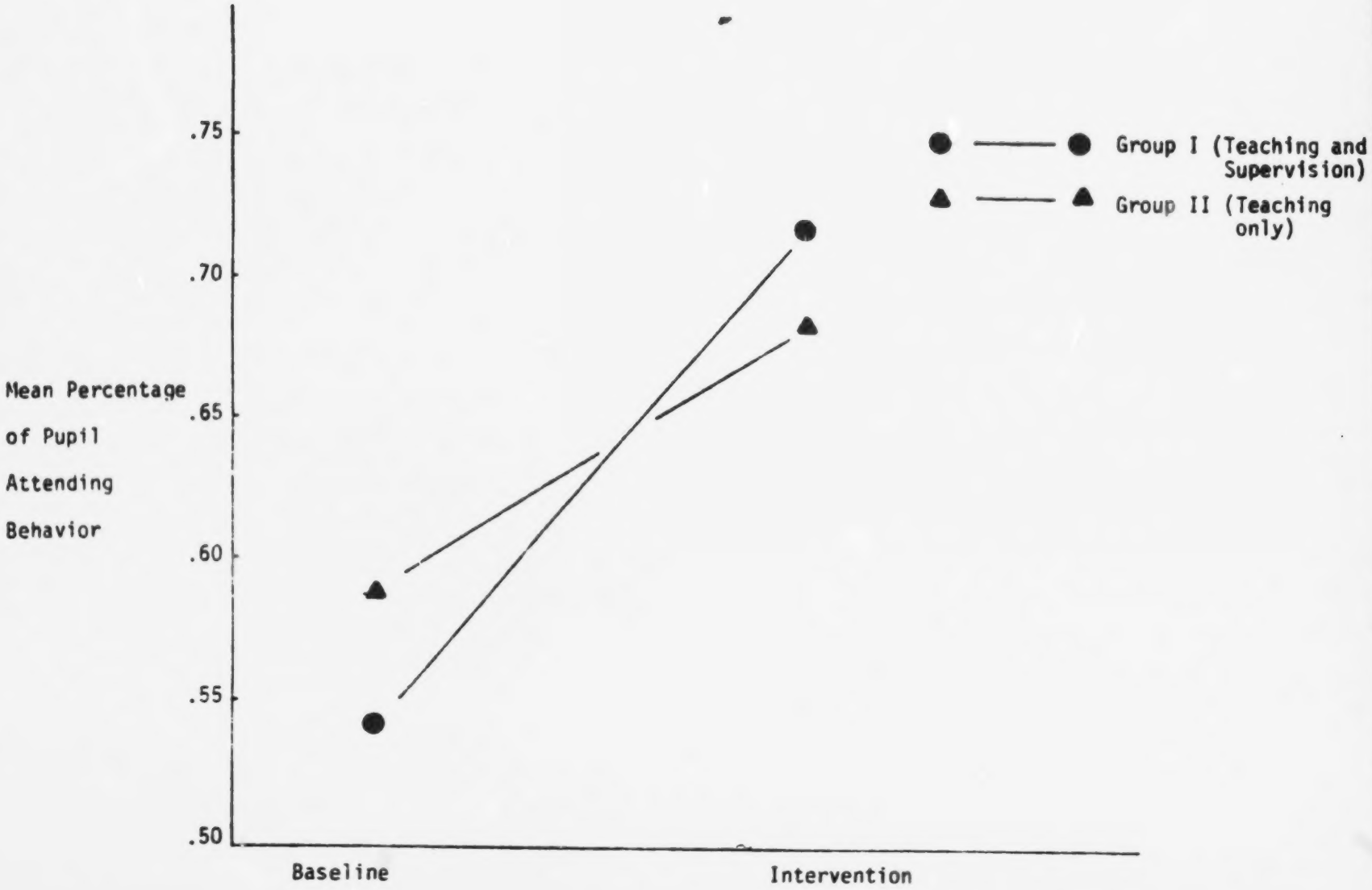

Figure 1. The mean percentage score for pupil attending behavior at pretreatment and treatment for teaching Groups I and II.

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